



Congress of the United States of America
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Bernon J. Ehlers

Michigan

July 24, 2003

President George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

Thank you for recently hosting the White House dinner in recognition of the 90th birthday of former President Gerald R. Ford. It was my great honor and pleasure to attend this dinner. While at the dinner, I spoke with you regarding the situation in Liberia. I am writing to reemphasize my thoughts on Liberia.

I respectfully, but strongly, request that you immediately deploy U.S. troops to Liberia. These troops will act as a peacekeeping force, and should work in conjunction with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to enforce a ceasefire and disarmament. The peacekeeping force should not only ensure the security of the U.S. embassy and U.S. citizens in Liberia, but also should develop a clear strategy for rebuilding peace and a stable government in Liberia.

This position is not just based on my opinion, but on advice from constituents. For decades, the Christian Reformed Church of North America, which is headquartered in my district, has provided humanitarian assistance and missions outreach in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Some of my constituents who have served in those countries have contacted me. They thoroughly understand the situation in Liberia, and they strongly believe that rapid deployment of U.S. troops to Liberia is the best course of action.

In the past, you have made any deployment of U.S. troops conditional on the departure of President Charles Taylor. I strongly support removing him from power, but believe we must take actions to ensure this happens. The atrocities in Liberia have worsened and the time for inaction has passed. When Sierra Leone faced similar political unrest in the early 1990s, the U.S. and Great Britain waited too long to intervene. This reluctance resulted in serious human rights violations including forced rapes, the severance of human limbs, and thousands of unnecessary deaths. Without immediate intervention, I am fearful that the conditions in Liberia will continue to deteriorate resulting in a major humanitarian crisis.

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An international coalition is supportive of U.S. involvement in Liberia. ECOWAS requested that the U.S. deploy peacekeeping forces. In addition, the United Nations secretary general, Kofi Annan, recently urged the U.S. to send troops before it is too late.

Your trip to Africa generated much good will and hope for a strong relationship between the U.S. and Africa. I am concerned that you will lose the goodwill generated on that trip if you do not act soon to deploy U.S. troops.

Again, I respectfully request that you immediately send U.S. troops to Liberia. A major humanitarian crisis is looming and the time has come for the U.S. to act.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vern', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Vernon J. Ehlers
Member of Congress

VJE:rp

Cc: The Honorable Colin Powell, Secretary of State
The Honorable Condoleezza Rice, National Security Advisor